



April 18, 2002

Honorable E. Clay Shaw, Jr.
Chairman
House Subcommittee on Social Security
2408 RHOB
Washington, DC 20515-0922

Dear Chairman Shaw:

AARP supports H.R. 4069, the Social Security Benefit Enhancements Act of 2002. The bill's targeted improvements for widows and divorced spouses will help ensure that Social Security continues to provide valuable economic support to older women who rely on Social Security for much of their retirement income.

The Association has long championed improved benefits for older women that are consistent with the program's long-term solvency needs. Over a decade ago, in hearings before this subcommittee regarding older women and Social Security, we testified in favor of eliminating the requirement that widow/ers become disabled within seven years after their spouse died to qualify for disabled widows benefits. We are pleased that the change has been included in H.R. 4069. The proposed readjustment in the benefits of widows whose spouse retires and dies before reaching the age for collecting full benefits and the provision waiving the two-year waiting period for benefits for a divorced spouse whose former mate continues working but remarries are also long overdue.

The Social Security Benefits Enhancement Act will help Social Security continue as the guaranteed floor of income protection for workers and their families. The bill has broad, bipartisan support, and we urge prompt House action.

AARP will urge the Senate to adopt similar legislation to improve women's benefits under the current system. Enactment of this legislation would send a strong message to the American people that Congress can act in a bipartisan fashion to improve the Social Security system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill".

William D. Novelli